



# URBAN VILLAGE: EAST SANTA CLARA

## Community Assessment

Transcription of notes recorded during April 7 and April 11  
community workshops.

## Summary: April 7 and 11, 2015 Community Workshops

These two community workshops were hosted by the City of San Jose Planning Division and were organized with the help of San Jose State University (SJSU) graduate students from the Urban and Regional Planning Department. Students participated under the umbrella of CommUniverCity and coordinated closely with the City of San Jose and a local community engagement artist team to gather resident input and opinions on the future East Santa Clara Urban Village (ESC UV). The first workshop was held on Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at the Roosevelt Community Center and involved around 70 community members. The second workshop was held on Saturday, April 11, 2015, at the MLK Library at San Jose State University where 40 community members were in attendance.

At each workshop, SJSU students showed audience members a video they produced about East Santa Clara Street's current conditions. The video featured corridor scenes mixed with interviews with local residents and business owners. In the video, residents and business owners responded to questions posed by the students that included, "What does your dream neighborhood look like?" and, "Is there anything that the East Santa Clara Corridor had in the past that you would like to see again in the future?" Following the video, a team of artists that included SJSU faculty member Robin Lasser made a short presentation on a community engagement project being launched in the ESC UV neighborhood. These artists designed postcards to elicit stories and aspirations from the community, with each postcard featuring an artist-rendered portrait of a community member and a positive affirmation about the neighborhood. San Jose City Planning staff members then addressed attendees with a short presentation on the objectives of urban villages, explaining the city's planning process, and presenting the vision for urban villages as described in San Jose's *Envision 2040 General Plan*.

Additionally, guest speakers at the workshops included:

- **Councilman Peralez** of District 3
- **Scott Strickland** of County Supervisor Chavez's Office
- **David Barry**, Senior Facilities Architect for Santa Clara County
- **Rosalynn Hughey**, Assistant Director of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement for the City of San Jose
- **Melissa Cerezo**, Senior Planner at Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)

Participants then worked in small groups facilitated by SJSU students and Planning Division staff members. Five to eight participants were seated at each table, as well as one student facilitator and one student note taker. The students first walked the participants through the conceptual land use map for the future ESC UV. The students focused on orienting participants to the different color codes on the map, how the proposed land uses would support the City's targets for jobs and housing in this village. It was then reiterated that the map was not finalized and the floor was open for resident questions and comments.



Following the examination of the conceptual land use map, residents were guided through a “Design Your Street” exercise by the students. Each table was given an aerial photo of a sample site along East Santa Clara Street. Residents were then asked to place pre-built blocks within their development site’s property lines to gauge opinions on appropriate height and density. This exercise generated discussion and brainstorming at each table about what the East Santa Clara Street corridor could look like in the future.

Participant comments from both workshops have been grouped together and summarized in the narratives and tables below.

### Results: What do residents want to see more of in their neighborhood?

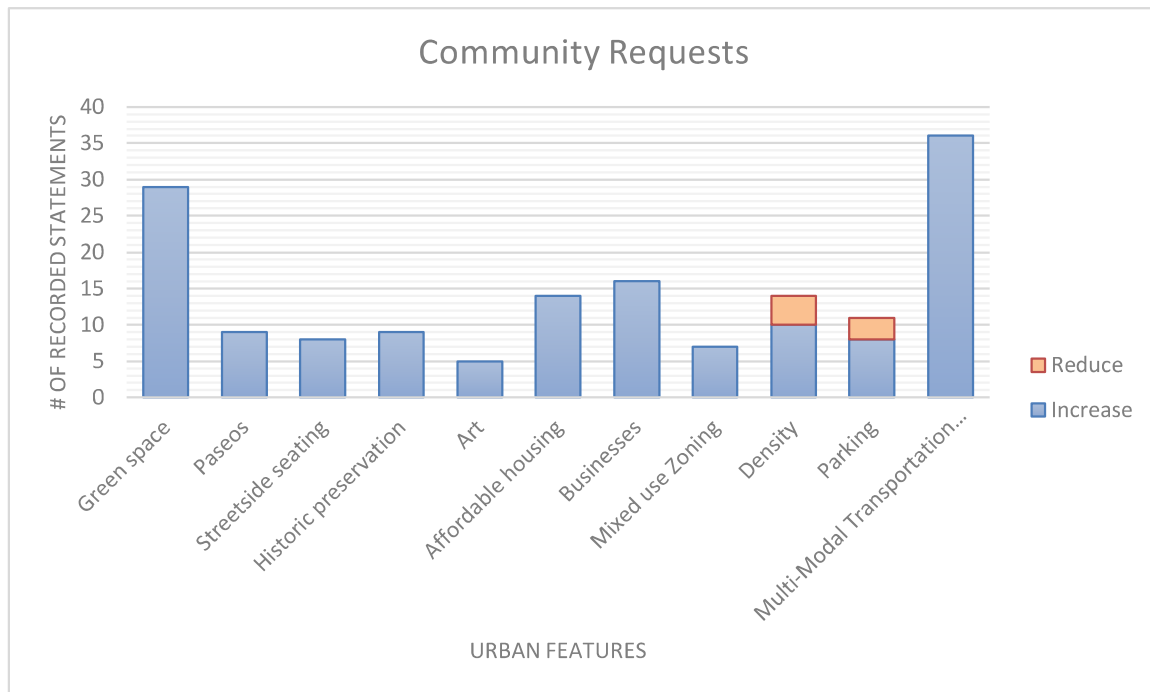
**Green Space and Improved Mobility Options.** Residents overwhelmingly expressed interest in having more green space incorporated into their neighborhood through parks, parklets, paseos and pocket parks. There was also much support for multi-modal transportation, with residents mentioning walkability, as well as bikeability and public transportation access, as an important future aspect in their Urban Village.

**Affordability and More Daily Destinations.** Also frequently mentioned was the need for affordable housing and affordable business space within the neighborhood. Residents seek more gathering places, including streetside seating, in which to connect with their neighbors and friends. Residents also desire more retail and commercial opportunities in the area in order to meet their daily needs without having to use a car, which is an Urban Village planning goal. Also important to many residents is the preservation and enhancement of “Mom & Pop shops” along the corridor.

**Safety.** Residents also expressed concern regarding the safety of their community; for example, many participants noted that they want a corridor that feels safe, especially at night.

**Building Density.** Generally speaking, most residents feel comfortable with a higher level of density along East Santa Clara Street. The idea of “bookending” density came up numerous times throughout the workshop discussions; that is, the notion of accepting taller buildings nearest to Downtown San

Jose, followed by a step-down in the middle of the corridor, and then increased building heights near the Medical Center site. In fact, this site was discussed frequently at both workshops. Many residents mentioned converting the streets near the Medical Center into pedestrian paseos that are closed to vehicle traffic.



### What are residents concerned about when envisioning an urban village along East Santa Clara Street?

The graph below summarizes the number of times that specific concerns were repeatedly mentioned by workshop participants.

**Positive Comments and Aspirations.** Note that the blue bars generally correspond to positive elements of East Santa Clara Street that residents wish to see more of, such as higher quality businesses, more students from SJSU to patronize local shops and live and work in the area, and increased support for the local farmers market. A number of participants suggested that the provision of free, accessible, fast-speed wireless Internet service in the neighborhood, or along the corridor where people congregate, would be a positive addition to the area. Coyote Creek was clearly seen as a positive asset to the area once it is cleaned and restored, and after improved access via bridges and trail connections are installed. The “Infrastructure” reference in the chart reflects participant comments on the need to upgrade older systems such as sewers and lighting as the urban village evolves over the coming decades. The “Staggered Building” item in the chart reflects a very high degree of support for sensitive building height transitions between new, denser development along East Santa Clara Street and adjacent residential neighborhoods. Other interesting comments that are

not reflected on the graph include support for forming a Business Improvement District to oversee corridor upkeep, and more public restrooms (with artistic enhancements to make them positive neighborhood amenities).

**Negative Comments on Current Corridor Conditions.** The red bars on the graph below reflect noise, the presence of smoke shops, and the prevalence of graffiti, all of which are aspects of current corridor conditions that the participants wished to see much less of. A few residents wanted to see reduced parking along East Santa Clara Street in order to foster usage of public transportation options while encouraging neighborhood visitors to utilize parking structures near San Jose State University.

